LEVEL news

Great Lakes St. Lawrence River Water Levels

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Water Levels for the Great Lakes and Montreal Harbour ... *a monthly bulletin from Canadian Hydrographic Service*

About the monthly Water Level bulletin

September Precipitation Over the Great Lakes

As a percentage of the long-term September average:

Great Lakes Basin	79%
Lake Erie (including Lake St. Clair)	35%
Lake Superior	122%
Lakes Michigan-	69%

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Dry September Throughout Great Lakes Basin

Lake Levels Decline Rapidly

After a relatively wet August, the weather turned dry again in September, resulting in a rapid decline in levels on most lakes. Levels on the middle and lower Great Lakes declined by about 9 to 18 centimetres during September.

While it is typical for the levels of these lakes to drop at this time of year, the decline was much larger than average. The combination of dry weather following a hot summer, which raised lake temperatures and evaporation rates, led to the rapid decline.

With the decline in levels, Lakes Huron and Ontario are slightly below average, while Lakes St. Clair and Erie are about 10 centimetres above their seasonal averages.

Lake Ontario Regulation Remains a Hot Issue

About 750 people attended four public meetings held by the International Joint Commission's St. Lawrence River Board of Control.

About 500 attended the September 18 meeting in Rochester, NY. Some 90 presentations were made to the Board by riparians, boaters, environmentalists and elected officials. Virtually all presentations were in support of lower Lake Ontario water levels. The Rochester area suffered extensive flood damage during the 1993 high water level period.

At the September 19 meeting in Kingston and the August 9 meeting in Alexandria Bay, NY (discussed in the September Level News), recreational boaters and riparians along the upper St. Lawrence River voiced concerns over low water levels during late summer and early fall.

At the Cornwall meeting on September 20, presentations were made emphasizing the importance and benefits of water level fluctuations in the lower St. Lawrence River for wetlands habitat and ecosystem diversity and productivity. Concerns were expressed that the existing regulation plan does not take downstream environmental and other interests fully into consideration.

Views and information acquired at these meetings will assist the Board in

Huron
Lake Ontario 63%

Note: These figures are preliminary.

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Summary information for "LEVEL*news*"

developing and discussing with the IJC the scope of work required for a review of the Lake Ontario-St. Lawrence River regulation criteria. This review was recommended in the Lake Levels Reference Study report of 1993.

Answers to questions raised at the Public meetings will be printed in an upcoming issue of Level News.

Lake Superior Level Rises Slightly

Lake Superior's level went up slightly during the past month. This is partly due to high tributary inflows brought on by higher rainfall in August and September. Also, the lake typically has a later start than the others to its seasonal decline in levels. Despite the increase, the lake is still about 13 centimetres below average level.

Low Levels Continue at Montreal

For the third month in a row, and fifth month of the past six, water levels in Montreal Harbour were the lowest since 1967. The combination of low outflows from Lake Ontario, low Ottawa River flows, and below average local inflows to the St. Lawrence River have adversely affected shipping at the Harbour.

The Harbour levels were below chart datum for several days during the month. To help prevent Harbour levels from falling below chart datum, the International St. Lawrence River Board of Control has released higher flows using four centimetres of extra water stored on Lake Ontario in late spring and early summer this year.

Risk of Flooding Reduced This Fall

With the levels of all the lakes lower than last year at this time, the risk of flooding is reduced. Lakes Huron, St. Clair and Erie are all more than 15 centimetres lower than one year ago.

The main threat of flooding in the fall months is during severe wind storms, which can create high seiches on Lake Erie. Despite lower lake levels, such storms could still cause problems, particularly near the eastern and western ends of the lake.

Niagara River Meeting With Public

Six persons attended the annual meeting with the public of the International Niagara River Board of Control on September 28 in Niagara-on-the-Lake. Niagara River Remedial Action Plan representatives were also present.

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